

News from the Wyoming Department of Health

Wednesday, March 17, 2010

Colorectal Cancer Screening Promoted for Wyoming Residents March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

A Wyoming Department of Health program is promoting colorectal cancer screening for certain Wyoming residents and providing free colonoscopies for some of them who otherwise might not be able to afford the procedure.

Colorectal cancer is the second-leading cause of cancer death in Wyoming and affects both men and women. Most colon cancer cases begin as benign, pre-cancerous polyps; removing polyps early can prevent colon cancer.

“Colorectal cancer is one of the most common and serious cancers we encounter, but is a highly treatable disease if picked up early,” said Dr. Brent Sherard, Wyoming Department of Health director and state health officer. “That’s why following screening recommendations is important.”

The Wyoming Colorectal Cancer Screening Program (WCCSP) recommends every Wyoming resident, age 50 or older, get a colonoscopy. The program also helps those who cannot afford it or without insurance coverage for the screening procedure by paying for colonoscopy costs for residents who qualify based on age, income and residency.

Since the start of the WCCSP in 2007, the program has processed more than 1,500 applications and reimbursed providers for more than 1,000 colonoscopies for Wyoming residents. Of the colorectal cancer screenings completed so far, polyps were removed in 45 percent of patients screened and cancers were identified in 25 patients.

Neil Hyatt, a Cheyenne resident, had a colonoscopy paid for through the WCCSP program last fall. Cancerous polyps were found as a result.

“I qualified for the program and it has changed my life,” Hyatt said. “I am now a cancer survivor.”

Hyatt continued, “Probably, without having insurance, I wouldn’t have come up with the money to afford the colonoscopy that found the cancer.” Hyatt’s treatment was surgical, and because his cancer was caught early he didn’t require chemotherapy or radiation.

For more information about qualifying for a free colonoscopy, please contact Alice Preheim at 1-866-205-5292 or alice.preheim@health.wyo.gov. An online application is also available at <https://ccedp.health.wyo.gov>

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